

Wabash Reflections



E – news presented by the Wabash River Heritage Corridor Commission (WRHCC).



What a summer it has been on the Wabash! Crowds have gathered at the River from north to east to witness the Water Trail grand openings. River Odyssey paintings have been viewed from New Harmony to Logansport, soon headed for Wabash and Lafayette. Trail ‘summit’, Rivers Rally, and Life on the ‘Bright White’ River bringing people together from all over the state (and elsewhere... the documentary was broadcast in Toledo in August). Our invitation last spring to ‘dive in’ was, apparently taken to heart. But now is no time to stop. Review this issue of Reflections for a glimpse of your Corridor:

- ❖ Posey County – Paddlefest 2006 a ‘grand’ event!
- ❖ Miami County - Plans in the works for a new access point.
- ❖ Fountain County – Have you seen this structure today?

Posey County: Wabash River PaddleFest

Popular Event Returned to New Harmony on August 5th



USI’s Historic New Harmony presented the second annual Wabash Heritage Paddlefest on August 5, 2006. Highlighted by a 9.7 mile canoe float beginning in Grayville, Illinois and ending in New Harmony, the event included ‘Grand Opening’ dedication of the new Wabash River Water Trail in both communities. Over three hundred canoe and kayak enthusiasts participated in this year’s second annual event.

“This event gives us the opportunity to highlight the natural beauty of the area while introducing visitors to the history of the Wabash River and its importance to New Harmony,” said Jan Kahle, Education Coordinator for Historic New Harmony. “The river was the lifeline to the rest of the world for both the Harmonists and Owen/Maclure communities.” For those needing a refresher, “when the Harmonie Society, led by George Rapp, settled on the banks of the Wabash River in what would become New Harmony

in 1814, the river was the life-blood of the Harmonist's commerce and existence. This role continued for the second communal society led by Robert Owen and William Maclure, who bought the town in 1825. As present residents of the area continue efforts on the third utopian experiment in this historic community of less than one thousand residents, the Wabash River remains a focal point" added Scott Wylie.

This year's PaddleFest event, in addition to the popular canoe float, offered a pancake breakfast, nature and history demonstrations, lunch catered by the Red Geranium Restaurant, games and an evening 'Luau' (at nearby Harmonie State Park). Two highlights for the day were the symbolic ribbon cutting ceremonies opening the Wabash River Water Trail, created by the Wabash River Heritage Corridor Commission, celebrating the importance of Indiana's most famous river. Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Indiana, returned as the presenting sponsor while Historic New Harmony, a unified program of the University of Southern Indiana and the Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites, was the principle orchestrator. For a complete list of sponsors, and more, check out the web site at www.usi.edu/extserv/paddlefest/sponsors.asp. Meanwhile, mark your calendars for Paddlefest 2007, July 28, 2007. Or, better yet, get involved: the first planning meeting for Paddlefest 2007 will be Thursday, February 1, 2007, at 10:00 a.m. in Historic New Harmony office. The office is located at 603 West Street in New Harmony.



See more of what's up in Posey County at: <http://www.in.gov/mylocal/counties/posey/>

Miami County – A New Access to an Ancient River

The Wabash River Trail has been in existence for thousands of years with recent activity in the decline. Though 'recent' in our minds may extend from yesterday to three years ago, 'recent', in geological time, is more like a hundred years. The Wabash River, however, was the key resource for the inhabitants of this area for eons, more than we realize in this age of the automobile. When transportation changed from water routes to rail or highway, the Wabash River was largely forgotten by many people.

We can be proud to say that the Wabash River is not forgotten in the minds of many people as there has been an increased recognition of the Wabash River as an important cultural, recreational, and natural resource. This can be seen in Peru, Indiana with such completed projects as the preservation of the Peru Depot along the Wabash River at the Broadway Bridge, the start of the River Walkway along the north bank of the Wabash River, and Miamisfort- a recreational playscape designed by the community and built in four days by the community.



The next potential project is the development of a river access site connecting the River Walkway and the Wabash River Water Trail at Miamisfort. The Peru City Park Board is considering the development of this Water Trail access and contact has been made with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources-Division of Water to coordinate the work activities along the river.

Development may include the need to obtain a permit for heavy equipment to re-grade the bank slope or stabilize the canoe launch area with a non-vegetative cover. In cooperation with the Fish and Wildlife Division, all efforts will be made to select a route that minimizes the clearing of trees and woody vegetation along the bank. Ideally, access will be limited to an area that has already been disturbed.

Miami statistical info may be found at: <http://www.in.gov/mylocal/counties/miami/>

Fountain County – An Old Building Brings a Recurring Challenge

Lakes and, especially, rivers, with non-linear and often moving boundaries, provide a serious challenge to those who wish to build (or even keep the buildings they have). While old structures present opportunities, and quaint charm, they may also provide a barrier to current use. This is the quandary, and the advantage, of our heritage. This is the situation of a particularly unique piece of property in the Corridor's own Fountain County; in Portland Arch, Indiana.

Portland Arch is a rural community first platted in 1828, with an addition in 1838. Almost as soon as it was recorded, in 1839 an error was found in the town's boundary, a line was added and a new plat recorded. So begins the saga of absent monuments, vacant surveyor offices, congressional investigation, and, of course, a meandering river. Regardless of the reasons (and numerous investigations appear to finger many), the Wabash is a constant and the properties nearby may always be counted on to be rich in nature and in history.

A particular property in mind, is an old grain elevator, with a history of service to the nearby community, which relied on the river to take the crop to market. Located on a bluff next to the Wabash, the Grain Elevator at Portland Arch, now better known as the community of Fountain, is about five miles south of Attica, off SR 41 and CR 650N, nearing Covington. The elevator itself closed in 1933, put out of business by the railroad which began service to the area in 1929. In this photo of elevator operators, one of the men is the father of Phyllis Jeffries, who still lives nearby.



The round grain silo still exists, halfway down the ridge towards the river from the elevator itself. This round masonry structure has now been remodeled for use as a bedroom upper (with balcony) and a family room lower, connected to a more conventional rectangular home owned by local resident, Betty Crumrin. Boasting a gorgeous curving stairway along an interior wall, and commanding a view of the Wabash River in Fountain County, this unique building is easily the centerpiece of Portland Arch. Just don't try to find it from a survey...

A "Thumbnail" on Fountain County is at: <http://www.in.gov/mylocal/counties/fountain/>

See you on the river. Ron James, Executive Director.